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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 001343

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GENEVA FOR RMA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/03/2016

TAGS: PREF PREL TH LA

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR RAISES MISSING HMONG MINORS

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR BOYCE, REASONS 1.4 (B, D).

¶11. (C) Summary. During a March 3 meeting with Thai FM Kantathi Suphamongkol, the Ambassador raised the issue of the missing Hmong minors. He encouraged Kantathi to respond to the Lao argument that the Thai needed to take the next step and provide the Lao with basic facts about the deportation of the minors to Laos. The Ambassador also suggested that the Thai find an interlocutor who could help resolve the current impasse. Kantathi responded that he would look further into the issue and discuss it again with Lao DPM Somsawat. In a separate discussion, Thai National Security Council chief General Winai indicated that he believed the larger issue of the Petchaboon Hmong created a human rights problem that needed to be addressed by the RTG. End summary.

¶12. (C) Ambassador, accompanied by Refcoord, raised the issue of the missing Hmong minors with Thai FM Kantathi during a March 3 meeting. The Ambassador started off by noting the good cooperation on refugee issues over the past couple years and the USG hope that this would continue. The Ambassador said he had been in contact, including sometimes almost on an hourly basis with Thai National Security Council chief General Winai a couple of weeks previous, in an effort to find a solution to the issue of the 26 Hmong minors deported by Thailand to Laos. Those efforts had not come to fruition due to new conditions raised by the Lao government at the time.

¶13. (C) The Ambassador continued that the Lao government was telling other governments and the United Nations that the RTG needed to take the next step in order for the minors issue to be resolved. The Lao were thereby scoring points at the Thai expense. Kantathi responded that he also looked forward to continuing the good cooperation on refugee issues with the United States. He said the RTG had stated its willingness to reunite the Hmong minors with their parents in Thailand. When it looked at this issue, the RTG was concerned about the pull factor which the U.S. resettlement program for the Hmong at Tham Krabok had contributed to. Kantathi asked if the USG was prepared to take any more Hmong.

¶14. (C) The Ambassador responded that the Lao were saying that the next step the Thai needed to take was to provide an official RTG communication that set out the facts regarding the deportation of the minors. The RTG should consider providing such a communication to put the ball back in the Lao court. The Ambassador also suggested that the RTG find an interlocutor, perhaps a current or former Thai or Lao government official, trusted by both sides, who could help find a way out of the impasse. Refcoord stated that the USG position was that there would not be another Hmong program, but the USG was prepared to consider resettlement for individual Hmong cases referred by UNHCR.

¶15. (C) Kantathi said that he had discussed the Hmong minors issue with Lao DPM Somsawat and indicated Thai willingness to work together. Somsawat had responded by criticizing the tone taken by the U.S. Embassy in Vientiane on the issue. Kantathi said that he would look more into the issue, including having another discussion with DPM Somsawat.

¶16. (C) In a subsequent telephone conversation with NSC head General Winai, Ambassador also raised the Hmong minors issue. Winai said he had told his counterparts in other RTG agencies that a continuation of the larger situation of the Petchaboon Hmong was not good and created a human rights problem. Winai said the RTG would be meeting to discuss this issue next week and that establishing some kind of camp might be the way to resolve the situation.
BOYCE